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QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PERSONS SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT

Written statement submitted by Pax Christi International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[26 February 1993]

HAITI

1. Since the coup d'état on 30 September 1991 - the bloodiest and most brutal in Haiti's history - the human rights situation in this Caribbean nation of 6.7 million people has continued to deteriorate. The wave of violations of the most basic human rights has increased tenfold, or even a hundredfold, since that date. During these early months of 1993, it has assumed horrifying and tragic proportions.

2. To support the haitian people in their struggle for justice, democracy, dignity and peace, more than half a dozen delegations, made up principally of members of Pax Christi USA, visited Haiti during 1992. They encountered Haitian citizens of all social strata: traders, representatives of the lawful Government, trade unionists, students, members of grass-roots organizations, peasants, priests and activists, and representatives of the Organization of American States.

3. The reports produced by the Pax Christi delegations without exception emphasize that the people of Haiti - the poor, workers and peasants, inhabitants of the poorer quarters, the unemployed, women, small traders and so forth - have to contend with brutal, backward repression even worse than the one endured by this courageous people under the reviled Duvalier dictatorship. This barbaric repression is planned by the moneyed minority and carried out by the armed forces, assisted in their repugnant task by "section chiefs", hundreds of armed civilians operating in the slum areas, and death squads referred to in Haiti as "Zenglendo". It takes the following forms:

Extrajudicial executions

4. According to human rights organizations, more than 500 people were killed by the military on the night of the coup d'état. The total number of deaths resulting from the coup now stands at 3,000. The most flagrant executions in the past two months have been those of Jacques Derenencourt, a member of a centre-left party, who was abducted by armed men and found the following day after being shot in the back of the neck, and a young student named Jean Sony Philogene, who was executed in front of his grandmother as he lay in hospital recovering from an operation.

Arbitrary arrests

5. Since the coup d'état, the army and section chiefs have arrested 10,000 people. Those arrests were arbitrary, totally illegal and unconstitutional. Mrs. Gisèle St. Firmin was recently arrested in the town of Cayes in place of her daughter, Marie Josée, a student and member of student organizations. Mme. St. Firmin was beaten by the soldiers arresting her and is still being held in the town barracks.

6. Freedom of thought, expression, assembly and movement, all of which are recognized and guaranteed by the Constitution, have virtually ceased to exist. At least three journalists have been executed by the armed forces since the coup d'état. Another journalist, Félix Lamy, has been missing since December 1991.

7. Faced with this situation and fearing for their lives, thousands of Haitians, especially the young, are fleeing the country to seek refuge in Florida or the Dominican Republic. Between November 1991 and May 1992, more than 40,000 tried to reach the Florida coast but were ruthlessly turned back by the American Navy.

8. Pax Christi believes that only by restoring democracy and reinstating the President elected by 67 per cent of the vote can a lasting solution be found to the crisis in Haiti. Pax Christi therefore calls on the United Nations and other regional and international institutions to implement the resolutions which they adopted immediately after the coup d'état in October 1991 by, among other measures, strengthening the embargo declared by the Organization of American States and reinstating the President elected in December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide.